

**12-15-08 LETTER TO A MONTGOMERY COUNTY RESIDENT EXPLAINING WHY
BETHESDA WAS NOT DESIGNATED AS A “BRAC ZONE”**

Thank you for contacting me about the recent announcement of BRAC Zone designation for five communities in Maryland.

BRAC Zone designation is awarded to communities that seek development assistance related to BRAC. The five Zones that were announced today – for specific neighborhoods in Baltimore (serving BRACs at Fort Meade and Aberdeen Proving Grounds), Laurel and Odenton (Fort Meade), Frederick (Fort Detrick), and Camp Springs (Andrews Air Force Base) – are communities in need of revitalization and that plan growth and development related to BRAC.

Montgomery County’s BRAC is a very different situation compared to the others. BRAC expansion at the National Naval Medical Center (NNMC) in Bethesda will not result in the kind of growth or development that the other communities plan or seek. First of all, while NNMC will gain 2,500 new jobs, the area will see very little population growth because the jobs are moving just five miles up the road from Walter Reed Army Medical Center in the District of Columbia. Most of those personnel already reside in or near Montgomery County and very little permanent relocation is expected for them. This is not the case with the other Maryland BRACs, where tens of thousands of new jobs are relocating from out of state, and personnel currently holding those jobs or newly hired personnel will relocate to Maryland, many with their families. These areas will need housing and will experience the kind of growth that begets more growth, such as the need for schools, stores, water and sewer, and other services.

Second, BRAC at NNMC will be confined to the NNMC campus – there will be very few private defense contractors seeking off-campus office space. Again, this is far different from the larger BRACs elsewhere in the state where large office and commercial centers are planned around BRAC growth.

Third, the communities designated as BRAC Zones seek new development as part of a revitalization effort. This certainly is not the case for Bethesda, which does not need revitalization and where a significant BRAC action is taking place in a highly developed and densely populated area. In our case, we are seeking transportation solutions to restrict traffic growth and congestion, not to create new commercials and residential traffic through development. Theoretically we could seek revitalization status for other communities in the County, but there is no BRAC-related development to justify such a designation.

While we don’t qualify for BRAC Zone designation, it is a fact that Montgomery County needs federal and state dollars to combat traffic that will be a result of BRAC expansion at NNMC. But BRAC Zone designation is for development and growth, not just transportation fixes. We are seeking, and have received, funding in other ways. Currently the State Highway Administration is in the design and engineering phase for improvements at four major intersections that serve NNMC. We are working with our partners in Congress and with the Department of Defense to fund an east-side entrance and pedestrian tunnel at the Medical Center Metro Station. We will also seek funding for RideOn to offer expanded shuttle

service to the area. A request is pending for a DOD grant to help construct new and improved pedestrian and bicycle paths in the area, as well.

For more information on the BRAC process and transportation projects in the area, please visit our web site at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/BRAC.

Again, thank you for contacting me about this very important matter affecting our community..

Sincerely,

Isiah Leggett
County Executive